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BROWNING WRITES REAGAN

OPPOSING NICARAGUA POLICY

DPS 86047

NEW YORK (DPS, March 13) -- Citing his recent trip to Central America and talks with the bishops and people of the Episcopal Church there, Presiding Bishop Edmond Lee Browning has written to President Ronald Reagan to express support for the Contadora peace process and to state his and the Church's opposition to aid to "Contra" forces attempting to overthrow the government of Nicaragua. (Eds.: text of letter follows)

Browning notes in his letter -- which comes at a time when the President is lobbying Congress for support for his proposed \$100 million aid package for the "Contras" (\$70 million in military aid and \$30 million in "humanitarian aid") -- the Church's two years of study on the situation in Central America, initiated by his predecessor, Presiding Bishop John M. Allin. Carried on through team visits in the area, which is Province IX of the Church, and through study reports of those teams and discussion on local and national levels, this resulted in two resolutions passed by the General Convention last September.

-more-

Resolution A129 supported a unanimous vote of the Church's Executive Council calling on the governments of the United States and all other nations involved to "take concrete actions in support of the Contadora initiative and process; to work toward negotiated, rather than military, solutions to regional conflicts; to cease all covert and overt activities aimed at destabilizing governments in the region; to affirm and respect the principles of national sovereignty, self-determination, and non-intervention in domestic affairs; and to respect human rights." The resolution further called on dioceses and congregations to encourage study of the Council declaration and to share their views with "those in authority in Washington."

The second resolution, D023s, calls upon the governments of the United States and all other nations involved to cease all aid -- both overt and covert -- to military forces in Nicaragua; halt embargoes and other destabilizing activities; "affirm and respect principles of national sovereignty, self-determination, and non-intervention in the domestic affairs of Nicaragua"; and seek a negotiated settlement based on the Contadora group's 21 points. The resolution also expresses support for the Diocese of Nicaragua's appeal to the members of the Anglican Communion for their help in obtaining peace in Central America and requests that the contents of the resolution be communicated to the President, Congress and the governments of the Soviet Union, Cuba and Israel.

Copies of these resolutions accompanied the letter to Reagan.

While fulfilling the Convention mandate to convey its opposition to the Administration's policy in Central America, Browning's letter also shares some personal "disquieting questions" about the President's policies and about his characterizations of the situation and of those who oppose the current policy. He writes, "I do not think that I am alone in finding it less than helpful for our national leaders to coin or corrupt the language of our democracy in support of questionable foreign military forces..."

"To disregard the reports of reputable international human rights agencies or undermine their credibility and legitimacy by preemptive accusations of 'a disinformation campaign' does not seem to serve the interests of our open national decision-making process, serve the interests of those in legitimate need nor enhance the vital work of independent, international human rights agencies and advocates.

"To ignore the advice and counsel of our historic allies and friends in Latin America, especially those who have initiated the Contadora process, strikes me as a short sighted approach to the common security of our hemisphere."

Browning sent copies of his letter to Reagan and the accompanying resolutions to members of Congress, with a letter acknowledging that "This may be a difficult political and moral issue for you and you may be caught in a dilemma created by the dictates of your conscience, the appeals of your constituency and the pressure by the Administration." He added, "I want you to know that you are in my prayers. I look forward to meeting with you and establishing a regular opportunity for mutual consultation."

###

TEXT OF LETTER FROM THE PRESIDING BISHOP TO THE PRESIDENT

Mr. President:

I write regarding your proposed financial and moral support of the "Contra" forces against the government of Nicaragua.

The five Episcopal Dioceses of Central America are a part of the Episcopal Church. We are proud of the mission and ministry of our sisters and brothers in Central America and we support them and their leadership. I have just visited with the leadership of our Latin American dioceses and my estimation of their contribution to the spiritual and physical well being of the people in the region has been strengthened and expanded.

After a two-year process, including a series of extensive visitations, study reports and nationwide discussion on the local level, the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, meeting in Anaheim, California, in September 1985, passed two resolutions relating to the United States' policy and actions in Central America. The resolutions are enclosed for your information. In summary, they oppose all covert aid to the "Contras," oppose attempts to destabilize the government of Nicaragua, and support the Contadora process. As requested in the resolutions, it is my intention to share these actions with members of Congress and the other identified governments.

On a personal note, Mr. President, I must share with you that I have several disquieting questions about your policies and your characterizations of some of the governments in Central America, and political processes and conditions in the region; and, I must admit, some of your public statements about those in this country who do not share your perceptions.

I do not think that I am alone in finding it less than helpful for our national leaders to coin or corrupt the language of our democracy in support of questionable foreign military forces. Identifying the "Contras" as "freedom fighters" obscures the issues in an attempt to attach the "Contras" to the historic memory of the U.S.

DPS 86047/4

To disregard the reports of reputable international human rights agencies or undermine their credibility and legitimacy by preemptive accusations of "a disinformation campaign" does not seem to serve the interests of our national decision-making process, serve the interests of those in legitimate need nor enhance the vital work of independent, international human rights agencies and advocates.

To ignore the advice and counsel of our historic allies and friends in Latin America, especially those who have initiated the Contadora process, strikes me as a short sighted approach to the common security of our hemisphere.

I question the public relations attempt to blunt or sort circuit full citizens information, discussion and participation in the formulation of the policies of our great nation. I hope your office will stimulate public debate and quality discussion not stifle it.

I am deeply troubled by these concerns, Mr. President. I must be honest in sharing with you that neither your public statements nor those of your administration have alleviated my discomfort --- a discomfort I do not believe is mine alone.

Faithfully yours,
Edmond L. Browning

###

AIDS CONFERENCE MEETS

IN SAN FRANCISCO

DPS 86048

SAN FRANCISCO (DPS, March 13) -- The Episcopal Church's response to the growing national crisis caused by the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) -- a concern prominent at last year's General Convention -- was focused anew during a March 4-7 national conference of more than 250 persons at Grace Cathedral here.

"The Lord is using this epidemic to call us to see what we really believe," commented the Rev. Michael Lopes during one of several panel presentations. Lopes, who has been appointed to work with AIDS patients and their families by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of San Francisco, said that one arm of the Church's ministry is by hospital chaplains who "spend hundreds of thousands of hours with people who have AIDS and with their families, usually volunteering for this duty."

"When they die, I die," he said. "And the most frustrating thing about my job is the hard-heartedness of some Christian people."

Though the conference produced no formal conclusions or resolutions, Church members could get a clue as to what is expected of them by noting several strong themes which ran throughout the four-day meeting:

- Christians are called upon to be open and compassionate to those afflicted with AIDS and to their families and friends;

- Christians are called upon to refrain from being ethically or morally judgmental towards those afflicted with AIDS;

- Christians are called upon to join in combatting unfounded fears about AIDS caused by widespread misinformation about how the disease is spread

- Christians are called upon to sponsor and participate in community educational programs designed to communicate the truth about AIDS;

- Christians are called upon to influence public policy and political decisions that reflect justice for those afflicted with AIDS;

- Christians are called upon to reject any thought that AIDS is somehow evidence of God's wrath being bestowed upon certain persons or groups of persons.

DPS 86048/2

This latter point was addressed by the Rev. William L. Countryman, associate professor of New Testament at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley, Calif.

"God's grace is not dependent on your goodness," Countryman told the conference. "Infliction is no index of human badness. Those who proclaim otherwise are flying in the face of the Gospel and in the face of the Church, Catholic and Reformed. We call this particular heresy 'works righteousness'"

Countryman built his theological and ethical reflections around what he called "partial answers" to the question, "What is God doing in the AIDS crisis?"

"He is bringing us all to a test, like the one his child Jesus endured," said the professor. "You are the vanguard. For others of us, our test focuses on our response to you. This is not a casual or incidental text. Our souls hang upon it."

A second "partial answer" to the question is in the works of God being revealed in the outpouring of love that has come about in response to the crisis.

Co-chairmen Marion Cedarblade of San Rafael, Calif. and William Lorton of San Francisco opened the conference by introducing keynote speaker Dr. Mathilde Krim of New York.

"There can be no question that the challenge to science and medicine posed by AIDS is one of staggering proportions," said Krim. "It is also an enormous challenge for the rest of our society. This is so in part because AIDS has appeared first among the politically disinfranchised among us: drug addicts lost to compulsory self-destructive behavior; gay men often still denied equal protection under the law and ostracized by the self-righteous; members of a minority community, the Haitians, intimidated by their frequent illegal status and their general poverty; the very sick or the victims of a genetic defect -- hemophilia -- who are in desperate need of blood...finally, infants, the pitiful babies of infected mothers."

"We may, because of AIDS, learn to live better with the infinite variety of people that exist in this world -- yes, even with lesbian and gay people, and to accord them the dignity and respect they deserve simply because they are human beings," said the physician.

The conference on the AIDS crisis was co-sponsored by the Diocese of California and The Parsonage, an Episcopal Church-related ministry to gay and lesbian people in San Francisco. "You are a wonderful sight," said Bishop William E. Swing of California in welcoming the conference to San Francisco. "You are a gift of God to an awful lot of people" for being here.

An evening Eucharist that included the ministry of healing through the laying-on-of-hands was a major liturgical focus of the conference. The Very Rev. Alan W. Jones, dean of the Cathedral, told the congregation that "for all of us, those who are afflicted, those who minister, those who pass judgment, the awesome mystery of identity is at the heart for it all."

Jones stressed that baptism is the context for shared identity, with Lent being the search of a lost identity.

"Come, and be touched. Come and be fed," said Jones. "Come and be healed. For the most real thing about you is that you are loved by God."

The final focus of the conference was the continuing ministry by congregations and dioceses throughout the Church to those afflicted by AIDS. Marcia Newcombe of the Episcopal Church Center staff, New York, shared the concern of Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning and noted that the Church Center is producing television spot announcements about AIDS, video tapes, using its public policy and political advocacy resources and sharing educational information about AIDS.

The Rev. Joe Doss of Palo Alto described the formation of a National Episcopal Center for AIDS Crisis to be based at The Parsonage in San Francisco.

"We've got to turn our commitment to what we will do next," he told the conference. He said an 800 telephone number (800-AID-TALK) will be in place by mid-March, stressing that the number is for information only and not for individual counseling. He said the National Center is expected to provide print and video resources about AIDS, resources that can be used for local conferences and liturgical material and prayers.

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Conference co-chairmen Cedarblade and Lorton brought the final plenary session to a close with words of encouragement to the conference:

"Don't be discouraged. Don't give up. You will face incredible odds", said Lorton. "Find compassionate people who are doers and not just talkers and get them to help you."

Cedarblade noted that not everyone should try to do a diocesan or regional conference. "Examine your own local situation and see what you can do. And then go from there," she said.

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ANGLICAN PRIMATES

VISIT CHURCH CENTER

DPS 86049

NEW YORK (DPS, March 13) -- Nine Anglican Primates from Africa and the Middle East visited New York in early March at the invitation of Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning for a day of "reflection and exchange of experiences."

The Primates were on their way to Toronto, Canada, where they will hold their regular biennial meeting under the leadership of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev. and Rt. Hon. Robert A. K. Runcie. Other Primates will make a similar visit to New York at the conclusion of the Toronto meeting.

While in New York, the Primates had the opportunity to meet with staff from the World Mission unit of the Episcopal Church Center and to learn more about the mission and ministry of the Episcopal Church at home and abroad. They also asked questions about the Church's involvement in social action, relief and development.

At a service at the Chapel of Christ the Lord at the Church Center, the Rt. Rev. Samir Kafity, Bishop President of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East, said that "we are all one" because "the Lord of history is one." He added that brotherhood and sisterhood are parts of God's plan for humankind. "We cannot be what God intends us to be apart from one another," he said. He praised the work of the Anglican Communion for offering a framework where part of this universal fellowship can be experienced and realized.

At a meeting at Trinity Parish, Wall Street, which has recently established an African emphasis to its grants program, Archbishop Khotso Makhulu of Central Africa questioned the practical aspects of the principle of partnership "where there is such a vast difference between those who have everything and those who have nothing."

The Rev. Robert Ray Parks, Trinity's rector, said that Trinity recognizes the problem but that in reality "we all are givers and receivers" and that Trinity's grants program tries to use its resources for mission at home and abroad in a spirit of "companionship in the Gospel."

DPS 86049/2

He also said that Trinity uses the guidelines of the Partners in Mission process recommended by the Anglican Consultative Council and has a full-time staff person who spends considerable time in the field in Africa.

At a dinner following the meeting, Archbishop Timothy Olufosoye of Nigeria pleaded for better use of "our common resources" and said: "We are tired and humiliated to have to extend our hands every time there is a calamity or we want to improve our lot."

Browning thanked the Primates for accepting his invitation to visit the USA and sharing their concerns. "We are always inspired by your witness and your dedication to the work of the Kingdom," he said.

Among the main problems confronting Africa today which emerged during the discussions are lack of material resources, lack of trained leadership, political and economic instability, tribalism, great masses of displaced persons and inadequate education and health facilities.

However, it was pointed out that the Church in Africa has a great willingness to serve others, to improve the living conditions of the people and to preach the Gospel.

"Our churches are growing because evangelism is our first priority," said Archbishop Manasses Kuria of Kenya. "There are millions who do not know the Good News, and we need help to train our people to be effective evangelists," he added.

The Primates participated at a reception hosted by the Presiding Bishop in their honor, which was attended by African diplomats from the United Nations. They also had extensive interviews with staff persons of the United Thank Offering, the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief and the Overseas Development Office.

The African visitors were guests of several parishes in the New York metropolitan area, where they preached or celebrated the sacraments.

###

CAUCUS ASSEMBLY

CELEBRATES THE CITY

DPS 86050

by Barbara Braver

Diocese of Massachusetts

PITTSBURGH (DPS, March 13) -- The sixth annual assembly of the Episcopal Urban Caucus (EUC) met here to mark a time of transition, celebrate accomplishments since its founding in 1980, and to "Celebrate the City -- Stir up the Church to be the wounded, loving hands of Jesus."

Keynote speaker, Dr. Howard J. Stanback, deputy director of the Mayor's Office of Employment and Training in Chicago, highlighted what he sees as the contrast between the picture painted by the Reagan administration of the current economic situation and the reality experienced by the poor.

An overview of Caucus history, outlining "where we have been and where we should be going," was given by its president, Byron Rushing of Massachusetts. Among accomplishments he noted were: the publication of To Hear and To Heed, a follow-up on the hearing held in the late 1970's by the Urban Bishops Coalition, and the publication of Countdown to Disaster, which raised up the connection between the nuclear arms race, with its economic demands, and the poverty of the city. He also said that Jubilee ministry, for which the Caucus pressed, was a cause for celebration, and he noted that he did not believe it a coincidence that all four nominees for Presiding Bishop at General Convention last September were members of the Urban Bishops Coalition.

Presentations giving an historical overview and update of current status were made on three areas of the Episcopal Church's urban ministry. The Rev. Barbara Harris, executive director of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company, explained that the Consultation, which she convenes and of which the Urban Caucus is a member, had its genesis in Coalition E, a progressive caucus which "formed on sight at General Convention." It does not have its own agenda but reflects the concerns of the 11 constituent groups, who feel they are more effective working together.

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DPS 86050/2

The Rev. Earl Neil, staff officer for the Coalition for Human Needs (CHN), explained the workings of that grant-making body, which is one of the three largest programs of the Church. It also administers Jubilee Ministry funding. The CHN funds both community-based and church-based programs dealing with social justice issues, while Jubilee funds only "Episcopal entities" to engage in outreach social ministry.

The Rev. Peter Golden, staff officer for Jubilee Ministries, said that Jubilee is the Episcopal Church's ministry for the poor and oppressed. There are now 68 Jubilee centers, each of which has both a service and an advocacy component, and which can serve as models for the Church. They are also "centers of evangelism." "We do not want just another social ministry program," Golden explained.

A two-hour "vision quest," with Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning in attendance, was a highlight of the three-day event. Some 20 persons shared their vision for urban ministry with the Presiding Bishop and one another. They spoke to a broad range of concerns, including such things as ministry with Native Americans and Hispanics, health care for the poor and issues for the disabled.

After listening to a litany of urban concerns, Browning said: "You've laid a lot on me this afternoon, and now I am going to lay this on you...I will be the Presiding Bishop of the whole Church, and get people talking to one another. Give me a little space. Be honest with me. Let's walk this walk together side by side..."

Just installed on January 11, he said that someone had said to him of his relatively new role: "It is an impossible job. You can not do it graciously, or you can not do it ungraciously."

A panel, moderated by the Very Rev. George Werner, dean of Trinity Cathedral in Pittsburgh, focused on the crisis in area steel and related industries and featured representatives of labor and management, as well as a social worker who told in graphic terms of the desperate plight of the area's unemployed.

The remainder of the Assembly time was occupied with fourteen workshops (on such topics as blue collar ministries, community organization, AIDS and disinvestment), worship, small group sessions and items of business.

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In the business sessions, the Caucus adopted a trial year structural revision. A task force comprised of representatives of the Board and regional representatives will oversee the affairs of the organization through 1986. This group will be convened by Rushing and Anne Scheibner (Massachusetts) and will report to the Board periodically on its work.

The Caucus elected the Rt. Rev. Mellick Belshaw, bishop of New Jersey, as its new president, and Diane Pollard, of the Diocese of New York, as vice president. As its final action, the Board appointed the Rt. Rev. Richard Trelease as treasurer and Annmarie Marvel of Massachusetts as secretary.

Newly elected Board members are Jane Jackson of California, George Ross of Minnesota and the Rt. Rev. Lyman Ogilby, bishop of Pennsylvania.

The Caucus passed a series of resolutions dealing with issues such as: monitoring the Church Pension Fund's response to the General Convention's recommendation on divestment; inclusive participation by handicapped persons in the life of the Caucus; and a challenge to the Church on the need to repeal the Gramm-Rudman legislation.

The gathering ended with a Eucharist at Holy Trinity Cathedral with the Rev. Dr. Franklin Turner, assistant to the bishop for congregations in the Diocese of Pennsylvania, as preacher, and the Rev. Nan Peete of Indianapolis as chief celebrant. Browning gave the final blessing.

The next Episcopal Urban Causus Assembly will be held sometime during the first three months of 1987 in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area.

The Rev. William Boli of Michigan coordinated the Assembly. The Rev. Canon Edward Rodman is the Caucus coordinator, assisted by Janette Pierce in communications and Marvel in administration.

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COALITION 14 HOLDS

ANNUAL MEETING

by Dick Snyder

Diocese of Nevada

DPS 86051

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. (DPS, March 13) -- Delegates to the annual meeting of Coalition 14 allocated \$1.3 million of national Church funds -- \$25,000 of it for the National Committee on Indian Work -- and reviewed progress in ministry development.

A project deficit of \$72,231 -- the gap between the amounts requested by the aided dioceses and the amount available from the national Church -- drew a great amount of attention from the delegates. Each budget had already gone through a process whereby one diocese may challenge the need for another diocese's program and budget request.

Non-aided dioceses committed funds from their budgets to pay their own travel costs, and aided dioceses all reduced their requested amounts. The final give-back came from Bishop Craig Anderson of South Dakota, who reduced his budget by \$10,000, adding that he was "hurt to see these kinds of cuts." His cut means the reservation at Yankton will continue to be without a priest, as it has for three years.

The reductions and the donations amounted to \$19,160. By reducing the meeting budget from \$40,000 to \$35,000 and reducing the contingency fund from \$35,000 to \$18,071, the Coalition's budget was balanced.

Coalition 14 is a group of 16 dioceses, originally formed in 1971 by what were then "missionary" or aided dioceses, which was designed to be a conduit for funds from the national Church to the dioceses, which had until then petitioned the Church individually for funds. The Coalition meets annually to distribute those funds through the process of full disclosure, accountability and challenge. Coalition members also share a common view on the mission and ministry of the church and most have Indian congregations and are actively involved in ministry among Indians.

Aided dioceses in the Coalition are Alaska, Eastern Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Navajoland, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Western

Kansas. Non-aided dioceses which continue as members are Arizona, Eau Claire, Nevada, Rio Grande, San Joaquin, Wyoming and Northern Michigan.

Some discussion during the annual meeting centered around what the role, if any, of the non-aided dioceses should be.

Bishop C. I. Jones of Montana said he didn't see a benefit to the non-aided dioceses to remain in the Coalition, but Bishop Rustin Kimsey of Eastern Oregon said he hoped "they stay with us" because of the opportunity for "scrutiny, accountability and friendship."

The Coalition adopted a resolution by Bishop Wesley Frensdorff, assistant bishop of Arizona, which affirms the non-aided dioceses as "valued members," encourages their continuing participation, and requests that they consider covering their own meeting costs.

In addition, the Coalition's executive committee was asked to consider a change in the group's mission statement to reflect a new role for the non-aided dioceses. The statement was originally drafted when only aided dioceses were members.

In other business, Coalition delegates:

- Affirmed its commitment to ministry among Native Americans through the National Committee on Indian Work and the member dioceses and committed \$25,000 for the October consultation of NCIW, to be held in Oklahoma City.

- Heard a report from Owanah Anderson, staff officer for Indian Work at the Episcopal Church Center, entitled "Ikhana," a Choctaw word which means to tell, to teach and to inform. Anderson also reviewed the current state of Indian ministry and issues such as treaty rights and federal budget cuts in Indian Health Service.

- Listened to a report from Kimsey about the nation's farm crisis. Kimsey attended a conference attended by representatives of thirty-five dioceses and the Apalachian People's Service Organization (APSO) and said he was "shocked and ashamed that I knew so little about the agriculture crisis." He said the Episcopal Church must work with other denominations to share information, form advocacy groups and to conduct additional conferences on a provincial or regional basis.

- Listened to a report on ministry development from three people involved with innovative forms of ministry enablement.

Howard Anderson of South Dakota said there appear to be three stages in ministry development: advocacy, team building and developing of teacher-mentors for the clergy. He added that those involved in ministry development are "very loyal to the institutional church."

- Spent time in small-group discussions to review the budget process and goals of the organization, such as requiring that parishes in the dioceses contribute 25 percent of their net disposable income to the diocese.

- Elected Kimsey as chair, succeeding Bishop Harold Hopkins of North Dakota, and elected Hopkins, Jim Eckels of Utah and Bishop Richard Trelease of Rio Grande to the executive committee. Also elected were controller Paul Chalk of Nevada and, as secretary, the Ven. Robert Herlocker of Idaho.

###



CLAIBORNE, RETIRED

BISHOP OF ATLANTA, DIES

DPS 86052

ATLANTA (DPS, March 13) -- The Rt. Rev. Randolph Royall Claiborne, Jr., who served as bishop of Atlanta from 1953-1972, died on Feb. 22.

Born in Farmville, Va. on Nov. 7, 1906, Claiborne was the son of the Rev. Randolph Claiborne and Mary Thomas Clark. He attended the University of Virginia, from which he received a B.A. in 1928, and Virginia Theological Seminary, from which he received a B.D. in 1931 and a D.D. in 1950. In 1949, he received a D.D. from the University of the South.

Claiborne was ordained to the diaconate in June 1931 and to the priesthood in January of the following year. He served as rector of St. James' Episcopal Church, Macon, and priest-in-charge of St. Andrew's Church, Fort Valley, Ga. from 1931-1938. From there, he went to Alabama, where he served as rector of the Church of the Nativity, Huntsville, and priest-in-charge of St. Luke's, Scottsboro, from 1938-1949.

In 1949, Claiborne was elected Suffragan Bishop of Alabama. He was consecrated as suffragan on June 29, 1949 and served in that office until 1953, at which time he was elected Bishop of Atlanta. On June 9, 1955, he married Clara Virginia Kinney Stribling.

From his retirement in 1972 until his death, Claiborne was Bishop Emeritus of Atlanta, where he continued to maintain his residence.

Claiborne was succeeded as Bishop of Atlanta by the Rt. Rev. Bennett J. Sims, who served from 1972 until 1983. The present Bishop of Atlanta is the Rt. Rev. Charles Judson Child, Jr.

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CLARENCE BRYANT

BISHOP OF ALABAMA, 1925

CLARENCE BRYANT (1875-1935) was born in Alabama, and served as Bishop of Alabama from 1925-1935. He was elected to the office of Bishop of Alabama in 1925.

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EASTER MESSAGE 1986

The Most Rev. Edmond L. Browning
Presiding Bishop

DPS 86053

My Sisters and Brothers,

Alleluia! He is Risen! The Lord is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

As I celebrate my first Easter as your Presiding Bishop, it is difficult to realize that more than six months have elapsed since Anaheim. During this time span, I have travelled several times across the continental United States, visited Panama to meet with the Ninth Province Bishops and Council and consulted with the Anglican Primates in Toronto. I have met literally thousands of people who represent the great diversity of the Episcopal Church, and each has greeted me warmly in the Name of the Risen Lord.

Since my Installation in January, I have been listening to what you, the Church, have had to say about the mission and ministry to which each of us has been called by the Risen Christ. Time and time again, I am moved by the strong commitment and hope for our Church and its mission and ministry which permeate the outlook of all who share their lives, persons, and ministries with me. This has been as true among the staff at the Church Center as it has been among those ministering to the hungry and homeless across the country. These first impressions from the listening process reaffirm for me the fact that we, as the Church, are an Easter Community nurtured by the hope of the Resurrection. It is with this sense of hope that I approach this Easter.

But let me also share with you another perspective of Good Friday and Easter. This is a quotation by Walter Brueggemann from his book, The Prophetic Imagination, which I first shared with the Church Center staff as the focus of our In-House week prior to Easter:

"...It is the crucifixion of Jesus that is the decisive criticism of the royal consciousness. The crucifixion of Jesus is not to be understood simply in good liberal fashion as the sacrifice of a noble man, nor should we too quickly assign a cultic, priestly theory of atonement to the event. Rather, we might see in the crucifixion of Jesus the ultimate act of prophetic criticism in which Jesus announces the end of a world of death (the same announcement as that of Jeremiah) and takes that death into his own person.

Therefore, we say that the ultimate criticism is that God himself embraces the death that his people must die. The criticism consists not in standing over against but in standing with; the ultimate criticism is not one of triumphant indignation but one of the passion and compassion that completely and irresistibly undermine the world of competence and competition. The contrast is stark and total: this passionate man set in the midst of numbed Jerusalem. And only the passion can finally penetrate the numbness...."

We must not dawdle around the events of Easter. The Risen Christ confronts us to move out in hope to proclaim, to heal, to reconcile and to teach, not with any sense of triumphalism but with compassion..."a standing with."

From the corporate board room to the shanties of the homeless, from the command stations of missile silos to hospital beds in AIDS wards, from streets of urban centers to the hollows of Appalachia, from resorts of affluence to the rusting hulks of steel mills, from suburbia to the reservation, the Risen Lord summons. He summons us to stand with Him in compassion for all of God's creation.

My listening has and will continue to take me across our country, and I have and will see the people of this Church ministering with hope and compassion. We cannot remain in the Garden tomb. We must go forth to penetrate the numbness of our world.

The Hope of Easter will continue to nurture and uplift us as we fulfill our several ministries. Let not the success of our ministry remove us from those with whom we minister. Buoyed by the Hope of the Resurrection, we must continue to stand with and in the midst of all people in all places.

Alleluia! The Lord is Risen! The Lord is Risen indeed!
Alleluia!

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